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ABSTRACT

The provision of guidance in adult and continuing education in Ireland was examined. First, policy in Ireland regarding guidance for adults in education is discussed in the context of the proposals adopted by the European Union (EU) Commission and EU Member States pursuant to the EU Year of Lifelong Learning in 1996. Recent literature on career guidance for adults is reviewed, and the concepts and theories that render the guidance needs of adult students different from those of younger students are highlighted. Then, the development of adult guidance policy in the United Kingdom is traced, and recent related initiatives in Scotland are briefly described. Presented next are the findings of a research study that was conducted by the Dublin Institute of Technology's College of Marketing and Design to identify the current and future guidance needs of adults in schools and third-level colleges. It is concluded that the focus of guidance for Irish adults must be shifted to a lifetime perspective and that a national vision of adult educational guidance must be developed that includes linkages with noneducation-based guidance services (local employment services, unemployment resource centers, and area-based partnership initiatives). (Contains 41 references.) (MN)

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Guidance in Adult and Continuing Education

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Guidance in Adult and Continuing Education

by Dr. Gerry McNamara

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FOREWORD

The National Centre for Guidance in Education is charged with supporting guidance practice, developing guidance provision, and informing the policy of the Department of Education and Science in the field of guidance. Guidance in the context of education in Ireland denotes a range of interventions to assist career, educational and personal/social decision making.

Across the education spectrum guidance provision is relatively well developed in the postprimary school and higher education sectors. In other sectors, notably adult, Youthreach and primary schools, guidance provision is underdeveloped. The Adult Education Officers Association approached the National Centre with a view to examining existing provision for adult participants in education. The Centre's response was to commission (i) a field study of participants and providers views of their experience of and needs for guidance (ii) a literature review of adult guidance concerns, and (iii) an analysis of the findings, comparative study, and recommendations. The field study was undertaken under the direction of Tom Fennell of the College of Marketing and Design, Dublin Institute of Technology; the literature review by Deirdre Teeling of the Psychology Department, UCD; and the analysis of issues by Dr. Gerry McNamara, School of Education Studies, Dublin City University. The discursive M.Ed thesis of Michael Burke, Adult Education Officer, Sligo VEC provided additional useful background information.

This report is the work of Dr. Gerry McNamara. It is hoped that it will contribute in a very practical way to the debate on adult education engendered by the Green Paper on Adult Education to be published by the Department of Education and Science in Autumn 1998 and to the outcomes of such debate in terms of policy recommendations in the subsequent White Paper. The personal, social and economic benefits of life long learning can be maximised if supported by life long guidance. This report highlights the issues and responsibilities for policy makers and education providers.

John McCarthy
Director
July 1998

INTRODUCTION

The following policy paper was commissioned from the Department of Education Studies, Dublin City University, by the National Centre for Guidance in Education as input into the forthcoming Green Paper on Adult Education being prepared by the Department of Education.

The paper is divided into five sections. Chapter 1 deals with current policy in Ireland as regards guidance for adults in education. Recent developments are considered in the context of the proposals adopted by the EU Commission and Member States following on the EU Year of Lifelong Learning celebrated in 1996.

Chapter 2 summarises recent literature in the field of career guidance for adults and highlights the concepts and theories which render the guidance needs of adults in education different from those of young people.

The next section of this paper, Chapter 3, consists of a broad outline of the development of adult guidance policy in the UK which has been at the forefront of adult guidance strategy over the past two decades. Recent initiatives in Scotland are also briefly discussed.

The findings of a research study carried out by the D.I.T. (College of Marketing and Design) for the National Centre for Guidance in Education are summarised in Chapter 4 of the paper. The study examined the present position and future needs as regards guidance for adult students in schools and third level colleges.

Finally, the Conclusion sets out some of the major issues arising from previous sections of the paper which should be considered in the development of guidance policy and practice for adults in education in Ireland.

CHAPTER 1

ADULT GUIDANCE AND LIFELONG LEARNING

1. Introduction

1.1 There is an urgent and growing need for adult guidance services in Ireland. It is estimated that there are at least **130,000 adult learners** in education in Ireland at present. Social and economic changes have resulted in the concept of **lifelong learning** replacing discrete initial education and training for adults, with a correlating requirement for lifelong guidance. Current provision outside of education is fragmented, duplicated and not universally accessible to all adult learners. Individual sector development has been carried out largely in a policy vacuum. The need for **policy development** on adult learning will hopefully be forwarded by the forthcoming Green Paper on Adult Education. In this climate, the development of guidance provision for adults in education needs to be addressed. **Without a clear policy framework, further development is likely to be of the pilot project variety – short-term funded and small scale.**

1.2 This point has already been recognised in the UK, leading to the initiation in 1996 of consultations for a new national strategy for adult education and guidance.

> "You [i.e. Ireland] may wish to develop pilot projects . . . but if you do this in a policy vacuum you are likely to become trapped in the cycle of short term marginal funding which has bedevilled developments in Britain." *(Rivis, 1991, p. 10)*

1.3 This Chapter considers educational guidance for adults under the following headings.

- **The Growth in Adult Learning**
- **The Concepts of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance**
- **Lifelong Learning – the European Context**
- **Adult Educational Guidance in Ireland**
- **The Need for Special Educational Guidance for Adults**

2. The Growth in Adult Learning

2.1 In a recent newspaper report, AONTAS emphasised the growth of adult learning.

> "Figures are hard to come by, but it is estimated that up to 300,000 adults flock back into education every year. Together, the VEC and the community and comprehensive sectors account for just under half this amount . . . up to 40,000 people – mostly women – are involved in daytime community-based education groups, which in many instances offer life-changing opportunities." *(O'Connell, 1997, p. 1)*

2.2 There are five main areas in which guidance services for adults in education are required in Ireland, as follows:

- **part-time education based in schools** – the majority of adult students are involved in this form of education;
- **full-time school-based education** – primarily unemployed adults involved in VTOS programmes mainly Leaving Certificate and Post Leaving Certificate courses;
- **third level mature students** – including part-timers, modular degrees, distance education – those attending higher education institutions or taking courses provided by professional bodies;
- **community development projects**, usually undertaken under the auspices of the Area Development Partnerships;
- **leisure pursuits and voluntary activities,** which may be based in schools, private institutions or a wide range of organisations, and which may or may not lead to further training and employment.

2.3 Why has there been a development in increasing numbers of adults returning to learning, whether at school or at third-level, or via the community or voluntary sectors?

The answer may lie in two major changes which have recently begun and are continuing to develop in western society: the so-called "**careerquake**" phenomenon, and contemporaneous **changing social patterns.**

2.4 Industrial competition and innovation have inevitably led to redeployment of staff and to redundancy. The lifelong "straight and narrow" career path has become one fractured and fragmented, with many turnings and pauses along the way. Traditional work patterns have been replaced by a mix of:

- individuals changing jobs and taking on a second career, whether voluntary or involuntary;
- periods of alternating unemployment/employment;
- new types of job;
- part-time working/work sharing;
- unpaid and leisure work;
- redundancy among older workers;
- an extending "third age" with an anticipated high standard of living.

> "Recent years have seen a major transformation in the structures of work and of career. The traditional model of career was concerned with progression up a graded hierarchy within an organisation or profession. Such careers are being increasingly fractured by linked forces: the impact of new technology, and the globalisation of the economy..."
>
> *(Watts, 1997, p. 19)*

2.5 "Careerquake" has had as its main casualty the increasing numbers of both long and short term unemployed. However, as well as the growth of unemployment, there have been other rapid social changes which have transformed the working world. The developing role of women in the workplace, increased longevity, and the changing concept of career have, for example, resulted in new subsets of adult workers emerging. All of these groups of adults raise particular guidance challenges. Categories of particular interest include:

- midcareer changers;
- women entering or returning to the workforce after child-rearing;
- older workers;
- pre-retirees and retirees.

2.6 The paper summarised in Chapter 2 of this Report highlights the general lack of research into adult career development. Until very recently, research was concentrated on the first two decades of life, up until late adolescence. There was no research into adult career development until the emergence of the first theories about gerontology and the study of retiring workers.

> "Adulthood is also dynamic. It is a time of changes of self-concept and aspirations, a time of transitions, crises, reformulations, a time of minicycles and personal redefinitions."
>
> *(Herr and Cramer, 1996)*

2.7 Career development for adults has recently undergone a radical rethink especially in the United States, where current philosophy sees adult career development now as based on a model of lifelong change. Earlier models understood life stages to follow one another in discrete units. Typically, schooling would be followed by work, marriage, children and retirement in succession. This is no longer the case: we live in a society of continuous change, where the idea of **lifelong learning** has come to be seen as the way to maintain society's future wellbeing.

> "The foundations of the traditional concept of career are being shaken and in many cases destroyed. In its place, a new concept of career is being built, redefined as the individual's lifelong progression in learning and in work. Supporting such careers is a major policy issue." *(Watts, 1997, p. 19)*

3. The Concepts of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance

3.1 What is the value of adult learning? The marketplace pressures on industry have instigated rapid technological change in companies, and thus expectations on employees for **flexibility in new skills acquisition**, **upgrading** and **multi-skilling**. The **variety** of forms of work and the fact that more and more adults **change careers**, increase the need for skills training and retraining throughout adult working life.

3.2 The year 1996 was designated the European Year of Lifelong Learning. There was much discussion of the need both for adult education and, arising from this, the need for adult guidance. The issue was highlighted at the Pathways to Lifelong Learning Conference in Edinburgh in March 1996.

> "Personal satisfaction and development, and economic prosperity, depend on individuals being able to access learning outside the "conventional" education routes... we need to develop effective adult guidance services and to encourage adults to return to learning and training . . . "
>
> *(Pathway News, 1996, p. 1)*

3.3 This quotation highlights the dual role of lifelong learning as a key approach for the future: on the one hand, it is a response to the economic forces which have already been mentioned – the globalisation of the economy, which is in turn linked to the explosion in communications and information technology, and unemployment trends. On the other hand, lifelong learning is not just economically justifiable but also acts as a way for society to realise individual needs and for each citizen to reach his or her full potential in a changing world.

3.4 As Chapter 3 of this paper will show, the development of adult guidance services in the UK has been driven by this dual rationale. It has been recognised that there are economic benefits to encouraging the uptake of further education, but that such a strategy also responds to the changing social needs of adults in working life. The broad aims of the UK's adult guidance strategy have been to:

- raise skill levels and achieve NTETs (National Targets for Education and Training);
- achieve value for money in education and training provision;
- enable the labour market – and emerging "learning market" – to operate more effectively.

(Watts, 1994, p. 3)

3.5 As well as developing structures and standards, and compensating for market failure in the current provision and use of guidance services, Watts sees the State's key role as that of creating a "more rational consumer". In the past, adults with the greatest need of guidance were not the greatest users of services; there was an ignorance of the benefits of guidance among those other than the unemployed; there was a "no charge" expectation, especially among those with the greatest need of guidance; and there was widespread employer ignorance.

(Watts, 1994, p. 5)

4. Lifelong Learning – The European Context

4.1 There has been growing awareness of the importance of lifelong education in Ireland recently, fuelled by EU developments. The Department of Education prepared a policy document entitled *Towards a Strategy for Lifelong Learning* as part of the input to the Irish Presidency of the EU in 1996. In a paper written to coincide with the closing conference in Dublin for the European Year of Lifelong Learning, Professor John Coolahan noted that in the context of lifelong learning

> "education and training are seen as continual, progressive activities of people throughout their lifetimes, from the cradle to the grave".
>
> *(Coolahan, 1996).*

He quoted a recent report of the independent study group to the European Commission:

> "Lifelong learning holds the potential to change the public's entire understanding of education. Modern society will be a learning society and Europe will have a dominant place in that society if this educational concept (lifelong learning) is developed."

4.2 At an earlier FAS/Irish Independent conference in 1995, the EU Director General for Education, Training and Youth, Dr Tom O'Dwyer, defined the rationale behind the Year of Lifelong Learning as "the continuously changing societies in which we now live becoming continuously learning societies" (Walshe, 1996).

4.3 One issue which has emerged from the EU initiatives is the importance of **ensuring that the disadvantaged have access to lifelong learning.** A recently launched Department of Social Welfare scheme is

designed to ensure that the unemployed can continue to receive their benefits while undertaking further education. However, AONTAS is currently conducting research which may show that those adults who are taking up college places as a result are those who "probably already come from certain cultural backgrounds" (Healy, 1997b).

4.4 Likewise, speakers at the "Count Us In - Equality and Access in Lifelong Learning" conference in Dublin in late 1995 called for measures to ensure that the disadvantaged - such as "poorly or unqualified young people, women, people with disabilities and those experiencing social and economic disadvantage" – would have equal access to lifelong education. (Count Us In Papers, p. ix). The EU Structural Funds are currently being applied to the provision of guidance for such disadvantaged groups among the long term unemployed in our society (see 5.4 below).

5. Adult Educational Guidance in Ireland

5.1 The Government has appointed a Minister with special responsibility for adult education and pledged in its pre-election manifesto to provide funding for the area, especially for improving literacy standards (Fianna Fail, 1997, p.14). It is the first Government to appoint a Minister with special responsibility for this area, prompting hopes that the neglected topic of adult education, and, as a consequence, the issue of guidance for adult learners, will receive more attention and funding. The Department of Education and Science will be producing a Green Paper on Adult Education, conscious that "it is a fragmented area of education with no national policy. Without a structure and policy, you can't get funds" (Healy, 1997a).

5.2 In their report entitled *Developing Labour Market Services for the Contemporary Labour Market*, Ronayne, Murphy and Corrigan state that current guidance provision in Ireland may be divided into the following sectors:

- **Core State Services** – principally second and third level schools and colleges, VECs, VTOS and FAS.
- **State Resourced Services** – such as Community Development Projects, County Enterprise Boards, Citizen and Youth Information Centres etc.
- **Community and Voluntary Sector Services** - non-commercial charitable, issue-focused or locally based organisations, such as AONTAS, the INOU etc.
- **Market Provided Services** - commercially based professional guidance and placement agencies
- **Other Services** – libraries, the media, trade unions in-company services etc.

(Roynane, Murphy and Corrigan, 1995, p.148)

5.3 The following comment, while general in nature, gives a flavour of the current overall provision of educational guidance in Ireland:

> "Educational guidance is provided free of charge, state-funded, and supported, in some cases, by the European Social Fund. Access to guidance for adults is limited in the case of those on full-time courses and virtually non-existent for those on part-time courses. Delivery is via many providers, described largely as "enthusiastic amateurs". Provision is fragmented, of inconsistent quality and there is a great deal of competition among providers. But, on the positive side, there are a number of largely ad hoc initiatives aimed at improving the quality of guidance, for example through in-service and post-graduate training. There is growing recognition of the need for training . . . "
>
> *(Keogh, 1996, p.24)*

5.4 The *Evaluation Report on Labour Market Services* prepared by the European Social Fund Programme Evaluation Unit describes a series of counselling, guidance and placement measures aimed primarily at the long-term unemployed – "the reintegration of the socially excluded and individuals with disabilities through improved access to education and training and by providing programmes that are relevant, flexible and responsive to their needs" (Evaluation Report, 1996, p. 15). Although dealing with one sector of adult learners – the long term unemployed – the report raises interesting issues. These include the importance of

defining terminology adequately, the need to link services and the quality of a service – which are pertinent to the development of guidance services for adult learners in general and which are treated in other Chapters of this paper.

5.5 There has been very little research into the state of adult guidance in Ireland. A recent study on the subject concluded that

> "the topic of guidance for adult learners has not received a great deal of attention in Ireland: not only has little research been conducted or published on the topic, but also there has been little serious debate or discussion about it." *(Burke, 1996)*

5.6 The study also highlighted a number of interesting points about the provision of guidance for adult learners in Ireland. These may be summarised broadly as follows:

- There have been two national reports and a national survey on adult education (National Council for Educational Awards, 1978, Commission on Adult Education, 1983);
- There has been a plethora of calls in recent years from the further education sector for adult guidance services, but little empirical data on existing provision or future needs;
- There is no single national system of guidance provision for adult learners;
- Apart from those institutions in the private sector founded specifically to deal with adult guidance, provision of guidance is by a wide range of state, community and voluntary organisations and tends to be an add-on, peripheral element to their original educational and training responsibilities;
- There has been no specific post-graduate course in adult guidance in any third level institution in Ireland;
- There is no overall broad-based service accessible to all: each sector providing adult guidance usually restricts provision to their own clientele, e.g. the NRB to disabled persons, the Unemployment Resource Centres to unemployed persons, etc.;
- A lack of linkages and networking has resulted in duplication of resources, little sharing of good practice, fragmentation and discontinuity. *(Burke, 1996)*

6. The Need for Special Guidance for Adults in Education

6.1 It has been argued that adults studying full-time in schools or attending third level colleges as mature students have a guidance system already in place of which they can avail. This, in practice, is the situation for some adult learners in Ireland currently. However, it is clear that **adult learners require a dedicated guidance service to meet their own particular needs.**

6.2 Some of the factors which render imperative the creation of policy and its implementation in a national guidance service for adult learners include the following:

- the breakdown of traditional career paths;
- lack of access by the disadvantaged to lifelong learning;
- adults' current lack of access to pre-entry guidance;
- the diversity and special psychology of the adult learner population;
- the need to balance educational and vocational elements of guidance.

6.3 The **breakdown of traditional career paths** has resulted in a

> "profound change in the 'psychological contract' between the individual and the organisation... the old contract was a long term *relational* contract, based on security and reciprocal loyalty. The new one is increasingly a short-term *transactional* contract, based on a narrower and more purely economic exchange... **Individuals have to take more responsibility for their own career development... including learning new skills and knowledge**" (this paper's emphasis).
>
> *(Watts, 1997, p. 19)*

6.4 In other words, workers can no longer expect to spend their careers in one organisation, with an employer taking at least part responsibility for the individual's career development. In this climate of continuous change, adults need lifelong access to guidance to enable them make educational and vocational decisions.

6.5 **Access by the disadvantaged to lifelong learning** is an issue which is currently receiving attention. As paragraph 4.3 above describes, AONTAS is concerned that the traditional profile of third level students has not yet changed significantly to reflect schemes to encourage second-chance education. **There is a need for outreach services into the adult learning community in general – a pro-active guidance initiative** in order that those less comfortable with the educational experience might be prompted to return to the world of learning.

6.6 This is also the UK experience. In its responses to the UK's public consultation process on lifelong learning, held in 1996, the Scottish authorities made the following point:

> "The consultation exercise showed that opportunities for learning are available but tend to be taken up by people who are already well educated and have confidence in their own abilities."
>
> *(Lifelong Learning, 1997, p. 6)*

6.7 Adult mature students form an important sub-group of the adult learning population. It has been estimated that, in 1993/94, mature students on degree courses in third-level education numbered 6,665, three-quarters of whom studied part-time (Coolahan, 1996). Several third level programmes, such as the very flexible modular B.A. degree offered off campus to mature students, are now also coming on stream. Nonetheless, adult students experience barriers to further learning which are not necessarily faced by young people in college. They may face funding difficulties, a sudden increase in other responsibilities; they may experience limited geographic mobility due to home commitments, and above all they may have to deal with their own attitudes to becoming a mature student.

> "Some of the self-concept issues encountered by mature students at every level involve low self-esteem. This may result from poor past performance in an educational setting, a fear of being too old to learn, and feelings of inadequacy due to lack of information about how to negotiate new educational establishments or the job market." *(Teeling, 1996, p. 82)*

6.8 It has come to be recognised that, on the basis of falling population trends, any demographic expansion of third level colleges will be based on adult students returning to or commencing study. Many mature students fall into the category of part-time attendees on campus. As such, they need special after hours facilities, as well as specially trained counsellors, to enable them answer their guidance needs. However, adults, while in greater need of support and guidance services, often see these services as available and useful for traditional students only, as the research findings summarised in Chapter 4 of this paper will show.

6.9 There is a need for **pre-entry guidance** specifically for adult learners which currently may or may not be met by services within schools or colleges. Furthermore, there may be a problem with bias; it could be difficult for an institution to recommend to a student that they switch to an alternative course in another institution. On the other hand, young people, progressing from schooling to further and higher education, can avail of pre-entry, developmental, and independent guidance in their school.

6.10 The adult learner population is characteristically different from that of the young student population. Hence special training for counsellors is required if their client's needs are to be adequately met. The adult guidance counsellor may be dealing with many different needs, such as those of an older redundant worker, a woman returning to work post child-rearing, or a career changer. In each case, different issues have to be addressed. The older unemployed may need reassurance, retraining and positive action to combat ageism, stereotyping, and fears of obsolescence. Women returning to the workforce raise issues such as dual-career family situations and overcoming sex stereotyping in career choice, and may require assertiveness training to reinforce positive feelings and combat insecurity and stress. So called "mid career shifters" face multiple issues in counselling, for example, family

pressures, social obligations and current work situation (Teeling, 1996).

6.11 The profile of adult guidance needs has only recently been researched and recognised.

> "Many adult students carry a full array of personal and mental health issues with them as they consider and pursue further education. Family and other relationships, substance abuse, sexual abuse, depression, self-esteem and other problem areas may be present and require the attention of counselling services." *(Teeling 1996, p. 73)*

6.12 The model of guidance adopted by The Department of Education and Science **balances educational, personal/social, and vocational elements of guidance**. At the "Count Us In" conference in 1995, the need to remove lifelong learning from a purely vocational context was highlighted. Dr John Ryan, senior advisor with UNESCO, warned against seeing lifelong learning policies as directed only towards job creation. He said that education "must serve the broader and longer-term goals of society in a time of dislocating change and often debilitating uncertainty" (Walshe, 1996).

6.13 Adult guidance may be either **educational** or **vocational** (or both) – guidance aimed at assisting adults' entry into education and supporting them there, or guidance aimed at supporting entry to/progression in the labour market. The White Paper on Education has stressed the need to clarify and differentiate between the responsibilities of the Departments of Enterprise and Employment with regard to "job specific and employment related skills training" and those of the Department of Education with regard to "all other education and training activities, particularly initial education and training" (Department of Education, 1995, p. 84).

6.14 However, there is an overlap between the two areas of adult guidance. The work carried out by the education and training sectors in delivering adult guidance should of necessity be inextricably linked if the needs of adult learners are to be met satisfactorily. Information on and choice of educational pathway should involve consideration of vocational opportunities in the community. Individuals seeking career promotion within an organisation or sector base their course choice almost entirely on job prospects associated with successful completion. Personal and social guidance is often a major issue for adult learners as highlighted in 6.11 above. Probably the best way forward is to regard guidance for adult learners as a lifelong process, holistic in nature. This is particularly useful in the Irish context, where there is already fragmentation of provision and practice among various sectors without further subdivision into educational and vocational guidance.

7. Conclusion

7.1 This chapter has set out the background to adult educational guidance provision and the reasons why such a service is needed specifically for adults in Ireland. The era of lifelong learning is upon us, and experience in the UK has shown that those adults most in need of further education are those least likely to avail of it. Therefore a guidance service must be proactive, integrated and accessible to all.

7.2 The arguments for encouraging learning by adults through provision of a special guidance service are both economic and social. In an era of long-term unemployment on the one hand and fluid career-paths on the other, such a guidance service could have the economic benefits of lowering unemployment rates and facilitating the movement of workers between jobs through access to learning. However, the benefits of adult educational guidance, as with all educational initiatives, cannot be measured solely in economic terms. It is part of our duty as a society to assist all adults to lead socially constructive lives as citizens.

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CHAPTER 2

THEORY AND PRACTICE IN ADULT CAREER DEVELOPMENT

1. Introduction

The following chapter summarises the concepts and theories described by Deirdre Teeling in her report carried out for the National Centre for Guidance in Education entitled *Adult Guidance – a review of the literature* (Teeling, 1996). Teeling's report is a wide-ranging survey of the literature, reflecting the broad range of theory and practice in the field of adult guidance. Several major issues emerge as central. These include:

- The characteristics of **adult career development**;
- The issues in counselling **subgroups** within the adult working population –

  women entering or re-entering the workforce,

  mid-career changers,

  the unemployed,

  pre-retirees,

  dual career couples,

  mature students;

- The concepts of **lifelong learning** and **lifelong access to guidance.**

2. The Characteristics of Adult Career Development

2.1 It is crucial to examine adult career development in the light of theories concerning adult development as a whole. Recent theoretical work considers adulthood in four ways:

(a) within the cultural context;
(b) as a series of psychological developmental stages;
(c) as a series of transitions;
(d) in terms of continuity and change over the life span.

2.2 The most widely read theories describe adulthood as a sequence of age-related stages of development.

- leaving the family – late adolescence to about age 22;
- getting into the adult world - early to late 20s;
- settling down – early 30s to early 40s;
- becoming one's own person – age 35 to 39;
- making a mid-life transition – early 40s;
- restabilising and beginning middle adulthood – middle and late 40s.

(Levinson et al, 1978)

2.3 Until recently, career development studies have concentrated on the first two decades of life. Theories of adult career development arose firstly out of gerontology, the study of ageing and retiring workers, then extended to other subgroups of adults such as those who change careers in middle age, or women returning to the workforce (see Section 3).

2.4 An important work by Campbell and Heffernan (1983) divides adult career development into four major phases:

1. **Preparation** for an occupation and obtaining a job;
2. Demonstration of competence in and adjustment to new work environment (**Establishment**);
3. **Maintenance** or advancement of one's position in an established occupation;
4. Decline in involvement in the workplace (**Retirement**).

(Teeling, 1996, pp. 2-3)

In 1957, twenty-one different career transitions were identified and analysed by Super. These were points during an individual's working life at which career stresses and strains might predictably occur. They range

from Initial Career Choice through stages such as Career Advancement (new job), Demotion, Levelling Off, Job Peaking, Loss of Mentor, Becoming a Mentor, and Retirement.

2.5 There are several issues which differentiate adult career development from that pertaining to adolescents. Firstly, an adult may have **acquired experience** and **developed judgement** that will influence their decision-making in choosing or changing a career. Most adults, for example, will be more aware of their needs and skills etc. than will adolescents. Thus they may be more confident in decision-making and require a range of useful career information which is not always central in career counselling services.

2.6 Secondly, unlike young people, adults usually come to career development enmeshed in a **complexity of life roles**. They may play simultaneously any combination of roles such as those of parent, child, breadwinner, homemaker, leisurite, retiree or one of a dual-income couple.

> "Adult transition issues often make career planning more complex in adult years. Those adult issues may include family and parenting responsibilities, financial management, divorce and separation issues." *(Teeling, 1996, p. 11)*

2.7 Thirdly, the nature of adult life and work has also changed. The so-called **"blended life pattern"** has replaced the previous usual life plan of sequential stages - school, work, marriage, children and retirement. The "blended life pattern" sees adults as moving in and out of work, education and family responsibilities over their lifetime.

2.8 Fourthly, the issues of **ageing** and **retirement** are still constricting stereotypes for adults. It can be difficult for adults to see themselves, for example, retraining and changing career at a mature age:

> "There is not one process of ageing, but many, there is not one life course followed, but multiple courses... there is not one sequence of stages but many. The variety is as rich as the historic conditions people have faced and the current circumstances they experience." *(Pearlin, 1982)*

3. Subgroups within the Adult Working Population

3.1 Women entering or re-entering the workforce

3.1.1 "Although the study of vocational behaviour is fast approaching its centennial, interest in women's career development is much more recent, dating from the mid-1960s" (Teeling, 1996, p. 11). Career development for women raises complex issues which do not necessarily arise in the case of men. As childrearing and family life patterns change, more women are re-entering the workforce, and they may feel an insecurity about careers which require special interventions. In addition, there are social and psychological barriers facing job re-entry for adult women: job discrimination, lack of marketable skills, guilt feelings and a low opinion of their own abilities and experience.

3.1.2 When counselling re-entry women, counsellors should:

- encourage positive feelings of self worth and emphasise the separation of employability skills deficits and personal worth estimates;
- provide career information;
- explore necessary lifestyle changes brought about by entering work;
- explore the issue of full-time versus part-time work;
- prepare women to deal with discrimination and bias;
- provide assertiveness training as required;
- explore entry-level jobs.

(Teeling, 1996, p. 32)

3.1.3 Counselling can help women deal with the following career stressors:

- Identity and self-esteem dilemmas;
- Multiple role cycling;
- Discomfort;
- Role conflict;
- Violation of norms;
- Decreased leisure.

(Teeling, 1996, pp 45-46)

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> "To facilitate women's career development requires an active stance and the willingness to encourage women to expand their options and choices, while simultaneously weighing the various reality factors that are important in their lives."
>
> *(Teeling, 1996, p. 14)*

3.2 Mid-life career changers

3.2.1 More workers are undertaking a second career, be it on a voluntary or involuntary basis. The term mid-life career changers refers to adults in the approximate age-group of 35-55 years old. Previously, adults were thought to be settled in a career by the age of thirty-five. Research into the causes of mid-life career shift has uncovered a wide range of reasons for change including the following:

- unhappiness with initial career choice;
- bereavement or other unanticipated changes in family situation;
- changes in job situation – dissatisfied workers, lack of skills;
- involuntary redundancy.

3.2.2 The needs of the adult career shifter for counselling will vary depending on whether the career shift was voluntary or involuntary. Those who choose to change career may experience fear of failure and require help in managing these emotions. The redundant worker may feel above all loss, grief, anger and threatened self-esteem.

3.2.3 Counselling mid-career changers must take account of adults' maturity of judgement regarding their own motivation and priorities etc. In this context, adults can be assisted in:

- assessing their own values, abilities and interests;
- enhancing their general coping and career decision-making skills;
- implementing choices where more of their self-concept can be expressed in their life styles.

3.2.4 Given that many mid-career changers are already in employment, there is potential for employment-based counselling for this group of adults. In the US, large businesses have developed "outplacement" counselling for soon to be redundant employees, which includes a combination of crisis, grief, family and career counselling. Another US scheme involves "inplacement" guidance in an organisation aimed at retraining or altering employees' behaviour in some way so that they can be retained in the company. This ties in with the idea of a "renewal" phase in adult career development, which would form part of the Maintenance career stage (see paragraph 2.4 above) – the stage which occurs after workers have already got a job and established themselves in it.

3.3 Older Workers

3.3.1 Research into the career stages of pre-retirement and retirement is more advanced than in other areas of adult career development, although there is still work to be done. Any studies which have been carried out, for example, deal only with male retirees. Given women's propensity to longevity, the issues of widowhood and retirement/work must be addressed.

> "The rapidly changing percentages of women who have long-term work experience and primary responsibility for their own retirement will require careful study in the 1990s". *(Teeling, 1996, p. 64)*

3.3.2 As longevity generally increases, the traditional notion of retirement is no longer valid and the end of the working life raises new issues for older workers (usually taken as being adults of over forty-five years of age). Extending working life beyond traditional retirement age, whether in a second career, part-time or full-time employment, may become desirable for a number of reasons:

- financial, due both to the current economic climate and to the growing desire of retired workers to maintain their lifestyle;
- psychological – feelings of self worth;
- maintaining a structure to life;
- maintaining mental and physical activity.

On the other hand, older workers may feel they have reached a plateau in their career (i.e. reached a point in an organisation beyond which they will never progress). Career "plateauing" is defined as "the point in a career where the likelihood of additional

hierarchical promotion is very low" (Ference, Stoner and Warren, 1977, p. 602).

They may also face ageism bias from co-workers and employers - such as a perceived lack of flexibility/obsolescence or lack of geographical mobility.

3.3.3 For those workers about to retire, the end of a career can have a considerable psychological impact. There can be a reduction in social contact, lowering of physical and mental activity, and a loss of personal identity. Stress can occur when individuals are forced into retirement on age grounds before they are actually ready for this life stage. So-called "life flow leisure counselling" can assist in gearing workers towards retirement.

3.4 Unemployed workers

3.4.1 Involuntary job loss and long-term unemployment are among life's most stressful events and have been compared to bereavement in terms of psychological impact. As a result, career counselling with this category of adults is particularly challenging. Structural unemployment is increasing in western economies – i.e. long-term job losses arising from redundancy of workers due to technological innovation and geographical relocation of industry. Thus, there is an accompanying need for specialist counselling of the unemployed.

3.4.2 "Job jitters" describes the psychological condition of extreme uncertainty experienced by employees even before redundancy occurs, when they find themselves in a business which is in general difficulties. As already noted (paragraph 3.2.4) "outplacement" counselling is carried out in the US by companies for pre-redundant employees. However, such programmes are usually group-based. Unemployed adult workers often need a one-to-one tailor-made guidance service to answer their diverse needs.

3.4.3 Five stages progressing from job loss to adaptation have been identified in the research as follows: belief, sense of betrayal, confusion, anger and resolution. Counselling aimed at families of unemployed workers as well as at the workers themselves is becoming more common (Fowler, 1990).

3.4.4 It has been found that the most successful programmes assisting the long-term unemployed have been those which combine skilled group and individual counselling with specific job training. Programmes which deal only with training or skills acquisition do not cater for the psychological problems caused by unemployment – e.g. depression, lack of stimulation, low self-esteem. The "chronically" unemployed can benefit significantly from interventions such as 'job clubs'

3.4.5 Strategies for helping unemployed adults should aim to:

- help clients develop a broad sense of self-esteem;
- aid clients to maintain a sense of structure in their lives and keep their activity level high;
- assist clients in developing and using systems of social support;
- encourage clients to accept external causal attributions for their unemployment;
- refer clients to community agencies as necessary;
- refer clients to vocational rehabilitation agencies as appropriate.

(Steinweg, 1990)

3.5 Dual-career couples

3.5.1 Family situations where both partners are involved in careers is a recent and growing phenomenon. It has arisen in response to current economic conditions, the changing role of women, and greater educational and career opportunities, among other factors. Counselling, sometimes conjoint counselling, for dual-career couples is an increasing occurence related to the stress of intensified relationship issues, conflicting demands, and time management problems.

3.5.2 Research indicates that women in particular are affected by being in a dual-career family situation, and many of the issues facing women entering or returning to work apply here (see Section 3.1 above). Young women, although committed in advance to a dual-career lifestyle, often do not have any notion of what this entails or how to implement it. This also applies to young men. It has been suggested by theorists that successful dual-career couples are characterised by flexibility and the internal security of the individual. The following intervention strategies for such adults are proposed:

- marital enrichment;
- stress management;
- value clarification.

As in the case of women entering or re-entering the workforce, counselling for dual-career couples involves lifestyle as well as career development. The relationship between working and non-working life has been rediscovered.

3.6 Mature Students

3.6.1 A major challenge arises for higher education institutes in dealing with adult students. The mature student population is extremely diverse; the adult in further education is characterised by his or her individuality. Furthermore, adult education has been defined in the literature as a **transition** from one status in life to another. The concept of transition for adult students may be refined into three phases:

- moving in (learning the institution's rules and norms);
- moving through (balancing student and other life roles);
- moving on (preparing for roles beyond college).

(Schlossberg, Lynch and Chickering, 1989)

Depending on what stage they are at in the transition process, the guidance needs of adult students will vary. This diversity highlights the fact that a counselling service for adult students must rise to the challenge of answering their diverse and complex needs.

3.6.2 The mature student population has been found to have certain common characteristics. These may be summarised as follows:

- the average age range of adult learners is in the mid-twenties to mid-forties;
- more women than men become mature students;
- adults seek further education primarily for career reasons (over half, according to a 1980 survey);
- they experience barriers to learning arising from everyday life conditions (e.g. funding), from geographical limits on the institutions they can attend because of family obligations, and from their own perceptions of themselves as students;
- they have more varied experiences in life than their younger counterparts;
- mature women students especially are in need of counselling services, yet are the least likely to avail of them.

3.6.3 Higher and further education institutes do not, by and large, provide specific counselling services for mature students. Existing services are geared towards full-time young students with limited maturity and life experiences. It has been suggested that such institutes regard mature or part-time students as peripheral, more frivolous about their studies and, because they have fewer productive years ahead of them, not worth the investment in special services required.

3.6.4. However, such specific counselling is in fact needed.

> "Rather than a simple restructuring of current practice to address adult students' needs – a whole new perspective is necessary to assist adults with their educational, career and life decisions." *(Teeling, 1996, p. 65.)*

3.6.5 Research has shown that there is a need for specific elements within a counselling service aimed at adult learners. These include the following: Information, Counselling, Referral and Outreach.

3.6.6 **Information** has been discovered to represent the greatest need among adult students. The range of data required includes:

- information on adult's own selves – their skills, interests and life situations;
- information on work-related issues – occupations, training, necessary skills, employers etc.;
- information on career and life roles, including career planning;
- general occupational information relevant to adults;
- information on occupations beyond entry level which will use their prior experience;
- educational options.

As well as **providing** such information, a student service must make sure it is **accessible** to adults who may be part time on campus; and they must show adults how to **use** it, as standard assessment techniques are not geared towards adults' more complex backgrounds.

3.6.7 **Counselling** adult students must take account of a range of personal and mental health issues which adult learners may bring with them. Adult learners may also be at different levels of progress in the career planning process and counsellors must also be aware of this factor.

3.6.8 **Referral** services can answer two problems. Firstly, adults can be referred on to specialist career, educational and supportive services when their needs cannot be met internally. Secondly, counselling services can liaise with other appropriate college departments to improve conditions for mature students e.g. as regards after-hours opening of service offices.

3.6.9 **Outreach** services also cover two areas. Many adult learners do not avail of counselling services either because they are not aware they exist or because they do not regard such services as useful or valid for mature learners. Raising adult learners' consciousness about the role of counselling services is necessary in third-level institutions. Apart from the existing adult student population, adults in the wider community are still often not aware or convinced of the idea of adult career development.

> "Many adults still believe there is something abnormal about desires to change careers or to return to further, higher or any form of education at mid-life."
>
> *(Teeling, 1996, p. 74)*

Thus, outreach into the community must proactively encourage adults to regard as normal the idea of career as a series of lifelong transitions and continuous education and training as part of that normality, and to use guidance services to assist in these transitions.

4. Lifelong Access to Guidance

4.1 The Changing Concept of Career

4.1.1 The concept of career has undergone major changes in recent times. There is increasing variety of forms of work and a need for functional flexibility among workers. Lifelong career development, and by extension lifelong learning, have become the focal point for debate about guidance for adults in further education. Career development is no longer only for adolescents. Adults are faced with ongoing decision making throughout their working lives. Economic and social conditions have resulted in technological change, globalisation and restructuring, leading to redundancy, early retirement and long-term unemployment. Economic changes have occurred in tandem with social and demographic developments, such as an ageing workforce, increased longevity and longer retirement, and the increasing role of women in the workplace. Together with greater educational participation among the 19-22 year old age group, workers are retiring earlier, whether on a voluntary or involuntary basis. This has resulted in the compression of the workforce into a narrower band.

4.1.2 A further issue with implications for adult careers is the changing relationship between the adult worker and his or her employer. Fluidity and change in the workplace has had a psychological impact on workers. Theorists now see careers as repeated "renegotiation" between the organisation and the individual. There is no longer the expectation necessarily of a lifelong career with one organisation. Thus adults become primarily responsible for their own career development.

4.2 The Need for Lifelong Access to Guidance

4.2.1 As a result of changing career perceptions, adults have become more responsible for their own career development and cannot depend on any one employer to fill this role. Hence there is a need for guidance to assist adults in dealing with the rapid and continuous change involved in careers. All adults must be able to carry out at least rudimentary career plans.

4.2.2 The need for lifelong guidance is justifiable on economic grounds. Unemployment might be reduced through guidance - small reductions in the rate of unemployment can lead to quite large exchequer savings at a marginal cost for the guidance service. Guidance for the unemployed can

- increase the efficiency of the job-search and reduce the duration of unemployment;
- restimulate some "discouraged" workers;
- reduce mismatch between the industries and occupations people enter.

4.2.3 Groups of adults for whom access to special guidance services is particularly important include the following:

- the disadvantaged undertaking second-chance education;
- older people returning to education and training;
- those on educational programmes in prison;
- those for whom leisure activities can become second careers;
- adults with learning difficulties or who require basic literacy and numeracy skills.

4.2.4 It is now the view that adult job seekers require a range of **career competencies** in order to succeed at finding and maintaining a job or occupation. These competencies, it is suggested, could form the basis of an adult careers counselling service (Teeling, 1996, p. 79). As part of the US National Career Development Guidelines, the National Occupational Information Co-ordinating Committee (NOICC) has issued guidelines for developing twelve adult career competencies as part of adult career guidance programmes (NOICC, The National Career Development Guidelines, Appendix A). These competencies fall into three broad categories: those dealing with self-knowledge, with educational and occupational exploration, and with career planning. They may be summarised as follows:

Self-Knowledge

- skills to maintain a positive self-concept (identifying skills, achievements, showing self-understanding);
- skills to maintain effective behaviours (including the areas of interpersonal skills, dealing with stress and self-defeating behaviours, organising support networks and managing finances);
- understanding developmental changes and transitions (life-changes, whether those involving motivation / aspiration, physical changes, and external changes such as job loss).

Educational and Occupational Exploration

- skills to enter and participate in education and training (planning career goals, identifying information and community support resources, strategies to overcome personal barriers);
- skills to participate in work and life-long learning (confidence to undertake study/testing, relating educational and life achievements to job opportunities, counselling and other resources);
- skills to locate, evaluate, and interpret information (how to identify and use information resources, what the resources are, identification of suitable types of job or means of self-employment);
- skills to prepare to seek, obtain, maintain, and change jobs (identifying specific jobs, including a job search network, resume and interview skills, developing flexibility as regards changes in employer demand, continuing training and transferable skills);
- understanding how the needs and functions of society influence the nature and structure of work (the social importance of work, society's effect on occupational change, the global economy).

Career Planning

- skills to make decisions (including identifying the personal and environmental conditions that affect them, and describing their potential consequences);
- understanding the impact of work on individual and family life (how family life affects career decisions, managing conflicting demands through assertiveness and time management);
- understanding the continuing changes in male/female roles (recent changes and trends, the elimination of stereotyping);
- skills to make career transitions (identify change as normal, how to cope with it).

"It is almost as if the job of guidance is to increasingly become one of helping people find something that has been taken away from them – a career".

(Teeling, 1996, p. 93)

5. Conclusion

5.1 This chapter has outlined the recent growth of research into adult career development and the corresponding realisation among theorists that there is a need for lifelong career development for adults along with lifelong access to learning. It is clear that adult career development necessitates a radically different approach to that currently available for adolescent career guidance.

- Adult career planning needs are much more complex than are those of adolescents, since adults find themselves emeshed in a complexity of life roles, are subject to continuous career change, and face difficulties such as ageist stereotyping.
- The adult learner population is far from homogenous and thus raises a wide range of counselling issues. Subgroups within the adult learning population include women entering or re-entering the workforce, mid-life career changers, older workers, the unemployed, dual-career couples and mature students.

5.2 The justifications for providing a specific guidance service for adults include the fact that:

- in the new jobs market, flexibility is the mark of the successful career, and constant career choices must be made;
- retraining and further education are becoming more and more necessary, and these necessitate suitable guidance;
- because of the new nature of work, adults are now primarily responsible for managing their own career;
- guidance can assist in reducing unemployment and in ensuring more efficient matching between available jobs and the workforce.

5.3 The research outlined in this chapter makes clear the need not only for increased guidance services for adults, but also the new perspectives on guidance required if the services are to meet the complex needs of their clientele. As the experience in other countries shows, the changing nature of work, and the consequent upheaval in traditional careers, has led to specific guidance initiatives, such as the guidelines set out in paragraph 4.2.4 above. In order to gain a perspective on what a new adult guidance service might offer, the next chapter of this report will look at recent experience in the UK.

CHAPTER 3

ADULT EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE PROVISION – A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

1. Introduction

In addition to being based on sound theoretical principles, any policy prescription supporting adult guidance in education in Ireland should take account of current policy and best practice elsewhere. The following section of this paper outlines the broad development of adult guidance policy in the UK and refers to current Government proposals for developing a national adult guidance strategy. In Scotland, educational guidance for adults has developed rapidly in the past couple of years, and some interesting practice in adult guidance services there is outlined.

2. The Beginnings of Adult Educational Guidance in the UK

2.1 The UK was the first country in Europe to develop a wide range of adult guidance services. The first educational guidance service in Europe was the EGSA in Belfast in the 1970s (Rivis, 1991, p. 2). Since the early eighties, there has been a rapid expansion in the provision of adult guidance. This was in response to the economic and social impact of the oil crises during the 1970s, Britain's industrial decline, urban tensions and youth unemployment. The perceived crisis in unemployment levels among 16-19 year olds especially influenced an expansion of further education courses.

2.2 The growth in non-traditional higher education and the promotion of the Open University as an accessible educational pathway were part of a general debate in Britain twenty years ago about access to further education for all. While mainstream careers officers were caught up in the need to get jobs for youth unemployed, it was further education workers who promoted the issue of adult guidance.

(Rivis, 1991, p. 2)

2.3 Initially, guidance was provided in the form of voluntary local initiatives by key individuals, either in their own institutions or via local authorities. In the early 1980s, guidance services were established through the local authorities. Upon gaining the approval of the local education authorities (similar to the VECs in this country), they began to receive funding from the local purse. The Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing Education (UDACE) was founded, and turned to educational guidance as its first area for development. Subsequently, the National Educational Guidance Initiative was created in order to consult with local authorities on the development of services. In its key report in 1986, *The Challenge of Change*, UDACE recommended including the following main activities in a comprehensive educational guidance service:

- informing adults about learning opportunities;
- advising adults how to interpret the information;
- counselling individuals and helping them to assess their learning needs;
- helping adults to assess their educational development and make appropriate choices;
- supporting individuals in their dealings with external agencies;
- advocating, on behalf of adults, with specific institutions if a particular barrier arises;
- feeding back information on clients' needs to providers.

(UDACE, 1986)

These activities were later extended by the Standing Conference of the Association for Guidance in Educational Settings (SCAGES) to include networking, managing and innovating systems change.

2.4 During the period 1988-1993, the National Education Guidance Initiative (NEGI) endeavoured to promote adult guidance and highlight equality issues. The

National Association for Educational Guidance for Adults (NAEGA) played a major role in the promotion and development of guidance services.

2.5 By the early nineties, adult guidance practice in Britain had come to be associated either with the Careers Services of the local authorities – where the vocational aspect of adult guidance tended to dominate - or with the services available in higher education colleges – where they were variable and still geared mainly towards the traditional young student population. There was also an initiative at this time to develop adult guidance through the Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs). The emphasis of the TEC scheme would have been, however, mainly on training. *(Rivis, 1991, pp. 3-4)*

3. Development of a National Strategy

3.1 In 1996 the UK authorities set in train consultations for a new national strategy for adult education and for adult educational guidance. This arose for many reasons:

- there was a huge range in the provision of educational guidance services throughout the UK, from areas with virtually no services to others with highly developed services;
- guidance services suffered from a general lack of resources and there was a tendency for the area to attract short term/pilot project funding;
- guidance had been at times marginalised due to its association with the disadvantaged in society;
- there was a lack of national qualifications and thus the absence of a professional base to promote the area;
- in the absence of a national adult education policy, it had been difficult to develop and implement an educational guidance system.

3.2 Over the past five years a series of papers have been published with a view to developing a national strategy for adult education, and, within that framework, for adult guidance. These include the work of the National Advisory Council for Careers and Educational Guidance, who in 1996 published a *Consultation Paper on a National Strategy for Adult Guidance*, that of the Careers Research and Advisory Centre (including Watts, 1994 and 1997) and the Department of Employment Further Education Unit (FEU, 1994) and its successor the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA, 1995).

3.3 The key elements which commentators agree have to be taken into account in developing a national strategy include :

- **flexibility**: to encompass the wide range of adult needs, as outlined in the first section of this paper;
- **local availability**: to allow for locally differing requirements and to ensure ease of access by adult learners hampered by geographical restrictions;
- the question of **charging** for guidance services as opposed to a free service;
- the availability of **ongoing** guidance in third level colleges;
- maintaining the **autonomy** of guidance services;
- the putting in place of **quality standards**, including practitioner standards (guidance qualifications);
- the need for a **proactive** system in order to draw in those least likely to avail of guidance (who tend to be those with the greatest need of such a service);
- **networking** of professional organisations in the area of adult guidance and hence development of referral systems and market intelligence.

3.4 The NACCEG has proposed a **national infrastructure for guidance** to replace the current situation whereby State guidance is targeted mainly at young people, certain categories of students and unemployed adults. The new structure would allow for a proactive approach to guidance provision, involve a mix of public and private providers and have locally specific delivery which would be nationally branded and/or kite-marked for quality assurance. It is envisaged that there be a two-level model involving, firstly, a **free foundation level** service and, secondly, a more specialist **charged service**.

(NACCEG, 1996, p. 4)

3.5 The foundation level service would be centrally located in major cities and towns with branches elsewhere. These open-access information centres would have the following components:

- up-to-date information on education and training opportunities delivered through a range of means, supported by IT, and including outreach services and a national telephone helpline giving individuals access to relevant local helplines;
- brief consultation with trained advisors to clarify individuals' needs, and indicating appropriate routes through the foundation service and further specialised services. *(NACCEG, 1996, p. 4)*

3.6 The foundation level service would then be followed up by charged services, which would be used to subsidise target groups unable to pay – such as students, the unemployed and the low waged. Some clients will pay for services themselves – others will share costs with an organisation (NACCEG, 1996). There is divergence of opinion in the UK about charging fees for adult guidance services –

> "Some respondents accepted the principle of paying for people who can afford to; others believed that means testing would use up resources." *(Scottish Office, 1997, p. 10)*

3.7 As well as a national structure – such as the NACCEG – which would set a quality framework, it is also envisaged that there would be structures at local level - possibly the TECs who already play a role in local adult guidance. The TECs might, at local level,

> "take responsibility for setting up partnerships between all the relevant interests and agencies, which might then be responsible for standard-setting and strategic co-ordination. The audit function could be performed by the TEC itself or by an independent contracted agency."
>
> *(Watts 1994, p. 11)*

4. Recent Practice in Scotland

4.1 The Development of Guidance for Mature Students

4.1.1 The Further and Higher Education Charter for Scotland published in 1993 set out benchmark standards of service for the community – potential learners, employers and community organisations – from higher education colleges. As a minimum, pre-course information, advice and career guidance should be available. The Charter followed work by a number of bodies over the previous couple of years in the area of adult guidance in further education.

4.1.2 Following a recruitment drive to broaden access to its courses, the then University of Edinburgh saw the need to develop an adult guidance service to deal with the growing numbers of mature students in the college. The aims of its adult guidance project were to:

- provide a pre- and post-entry and a pre-exit service, geared towards adults' specific needs;
- facilitate informal networking among adult students;
- provide staff development and appropriate resources;
- instigate a monitoring system;
- develop links with other educational institutions and with employers.

4.1.3 The University surveyed both consumers and staff about their view of guidance. What emerged was that there was little difference between the needs of traditional and non-traditional students, except that mature students sought more intervention with employers from a guidance service. Staff responses highlighted two problems: the level of resources available to fund new departures and the low status ascribed to guidance.

4.1.4 In line with this, a survey by Blair (1993) interestingly found that there was a better situation with regard to adult guidance provision in **schools** than in further education colleges. It was felt that schools were more conscious of adult learners' needs because the adults "stuck out" more than they would in colleges.

4.2 The Scottish Guidance Group

4.2.1 In 1997 the Government published an important document entitled *Lifelong Learning: the Way Forward*, based on a public consultation process. The document saw guidance as part of a support infrastructure for learners,

> "including a combination of visible and accessible information and guidance, community-based provision and childcare provision."
> *(UK Government Publication, 1997)*

The responses to the consultation were especially concerned with the "participation of disadvantaged groups and people with no qualifications or a poor experience of the educational system". Thus it was not surprising that adult information, advice and guidance was the issue which attracted most comment.

4.2.2 *Lifelong Learning: the Way Forward* called for a national body to support adult guidance, and it pledged £6 million to fund lifelong learning and adult guidance in Scotland. It envisaged the setting up of an advisory and support group (the Scottish Guidance Group) to oversee the building up of local partnerships or the strengthening of existing ones. The support group would develop the work of the AEGIS in the following ways:

- providing a national helpline and supporting computer database;
- co-ordinating local networks;
- disseminating good practice;
- advice on standards and quality assurance;
- marketing of guidance under a nationally recognisable brand;
- training.

5. Local Scottish Adult Guidance Projects

5.1 It will be interesting to see how the provision of substantial funding such as that envisaged in the "Lifelong Learning" proposals will integrate the specific local practices taking place throughout Scotland. Some local projects of interest are detailed in *Adult Guidance In Practice* published in 1996 by the Adult Educational Guidance Initiative Scotland (AEGIS). Included are **helpline** projects, **information networking**, **community outreach** and **shop-based** projects.

5.2 Helpline Projects

5.2.1 The **Central Adult Guidance Helpline** is a freephone service operating since 1992 in the Central Region of Scotland. It is based in the offices of the Central Adult Guidance Network and is staffed by an adult guidance counsellor, an open learning co-ordinator, an adult guidance co-ordinator and a clerical assistant. In line with the purpose of the Adult Guidance Network of practitioners and agencies in the Central Region, the Helpline deals with enquiries on educational, vocational and personal guidance and makes appropriate referrals to guidance providers. It offers initial advice based on information resources such as Careers Library resources, further education prospectuses, information on local providers and careers information databases on local and national learning opportunities. The Helpline is available during office hours, with an answering machine service outside hours, and the service extends into rural areas. This has been a very successful project, and the following elements are cited as having played a part in this success:

- Impartial first line guidance and advice;
- High level of client satisfaction with advice and information offered;
- Approachable, friendly response to enquiries and referral to appropriate organisation;
- Freephone service;
- Accurate information on local and national guidance, learning and training providers;
- Links to local Adult Guidance Network. *(AEGIS, 1996, p. 36)*

5.2.2 The **Fife Telephone Enquiry Service** is somewhat different in that it is not a dedicated line. Calls coming into the Fife Adult Guidance Service Resource Centre are filtered to an Information Officer who will

> "undertake appropriate research associated with educational and vocational opportunities and make appropriate direct and indirect client referral to other organisations."
> *(AEGIS, 1996, p. 38)*

There is a well established network of links to other services such as Careers Advisors, Education and Training Providers, and local Information Points.

5.3 Information Networking

5.3.1 **Information networking** is a key element of the Pathways Adult Guidance Service based in the Borders Region. The Community Education Service launched the service in 1995 but Pathways "aims to provide a broad-based and independent service with referrals to the CES being treated in the same way as other sectors." (However the point is made that many clients would naturally be referred to the CES' adult learning programme in any case.) The Service operates through five Community Education Area Offices, each with laptop computer access to a centrally organised information database and each with dedicated guidance counselling staff time.

> "First step returners are proactively targeted. The services available include an information service, telephone guidance, and an appointment service, including action planning."
>
> *(AEGIS, 1996, p. 7)*

5.3.2 A future planned development is **"Pathways on the Road"** - an outreach project which will use the regional library network and mobile libraries to extend the adult guidance service into the Borders region by means of workshops and drop-in centres.

5.4 Outreach Projects

5.4.1 Other **outreach** guidance projects in Scotland include several **Mobile Projects.** These operate in either isolated or rural areas, or in urban areas to raise participation levels among groups of people and in geographical areas not traditionally associated with high participation rates in further and higher education. The vehicles used can be double-decker buses or transit vans or specially modified mobile units. For example, the **Mobile Training Unit** Project was established in 1993 with initial funding from Scottish Enterprise Tayside (later joined by Perth College, ESF etc.). The Unit is used by the different departments of Perth College to provide a range of services, including:

- Careers Counselling;
- Adult Learning Promotions;
- Adult Education - short courses/groupwork;
- Information – access to Careers Library, portable databases and college information;
- Marketing - Perth College courses and services information;
- Redundancy Counselling – contracts to deliver initial advice and guidance on employers' premises with follow-up for one on one guidance.

(AEGIS, 1996, pp 46-47)

5.4.2 Another mobile service, the **ALFAbus project,** is managed by the Community Education Service in the Central Region and is funded by the local authority and the ESF. As well as adult guidance courses, information and referral, it also offers core skills training, personal development courses, accredited training for SCOTVEC and other services according to local needs identified by Community Education Officers.

(AEGIS, 1996, pp 46-47)

5.5 Shop Based Projects

5.5.1 Also of interest in Scottish guidance practice are two **shop-based** projects, one in Tayside and one in Falkirk. The Tayside project, **New Directions**, is operated is conjunction with a wide range of local higher education colleges and is also linked with Scottish Enterprise Tayside. It has its own staffing, but advisers from the partner agencies also participate from time to time in delivery of a wide range of guidance services available on a drop-in or appointment basis (AEGIS, 1996, pp 24-26). The **Forth Directions** shop-based facility in Falkirk, in contrast, is aimed mainly at people in employment and charges both individuals and corporate clients for its services, with any deficit being met by Forth Valley Enterprise. There is an outreach service to employers' premises.

(AEGIS, 1996, pp 27-29)

6. Professional Training in Scotland

6.1 Dedicated training of adult guidance workers in Scotland was not specifically available until recently. Teaching qualification programmes deal with guidance issues only as an optional subject. There have been recent initiatives to improve this situation. The Lothian Region has established an adult guidance development team with responsibilities for supporting and developing practitioner training; the Scottish Further Education Unit (SFEU) has been active in delivering a range of training programmes in guidance issues to various sectors; and there is now a certificate and diploma in adult guidance offered by the Scottish School of Further Education at Strathclyde University (Connolly, 1995).

7. Conclusion

7.1 The development of guidance for adults in the UK has mainly taken place over the past two decades. There has been rapid and variable expansion in the level of services offered in different regions, a lack of medium and long term funding, a perception of adult guidance as for the marginalised in society, and a lack of national professional training for guidance workers.

7.2 The difficulty of establishing a national adult guidance policy in the absence of a national framework for adult education has been realised. Accordingly, in 1996 consultations were set in train to establish a framework for both adult education and guidance and there is currently wide-ranging debate in the UK about various policy proposals.

7.3 The key elements suggested for establishing a guidance service (see paragraph 2.3 above) and the proposed two-tier national infrastructure of a free foundation level service and a more specialist charged service may not be completely suitable for the Irish situation, given the different structures around which adult education is organised in this country, demographic and geographical factors, and so on. Nonetheless, the much-needed public consultation and discussion of guidance services for adults in education in Ireland could take as its starting point recent UK proposals and the experience of the Scottish projects. What is clear is that the formulation of policy must take account of the existing structures for adult education and the existing guidance provision currently on offer to adults in Irish education. The next chapter focuses on recent research on such provision.

CHAPTER 4

ADULT EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE PROVISION – A RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

1. Introduction

1.1 The research project described in this Chapter was carried out for the National Centre for Guidance in Education by the Dublin Institute of Technology College of Marketing and Design (COMAD). The objectives of the study, which deals with third level and school based adult students, were broadly as follows:

- to **establish** the reaction of students and providers to **current** provision;
- to **identify** new approaches that would meet **perceived needs**.

(COMAD, 1997)

1.2 To this end, the study investigated several key issues relating to the current and desired provision of adult educational guidance, by means of both qualitative and quantitative research. These were as follows:

1. The factors underlying students' **choice of course**, and both students and guidance providers' view of **guidance received** in making the choice.
2. Factors influencing students' **choice of college**, and both students and guidance providers' views of **guidance received** before making the decision.
3. Students' and guidance providers' overall views of the **desirability of having a guidance service.**
4. **Preferred characteristics of guidance** - under headings such as the sequence of guidance, its extent, setting, location, time and price.

1.3 The research study was carried out in two stages. The first stage took place in Spring 1997. A questionnaire was administered in 34 schools and 5 third level colleges, in the form of a pre-arranged meeting with a teacher and up to 10 students from a variety of courses. The sample of schools and colleges was designed to reflect the spread of adult education among the vocational schools, community and comprehensive schools and third level, as well as its geographic profile and male/female balance. Useable replies were received from 274 students and 25 adult education providers (providers were defined as either adult education officers or the principal).

1.4 The second stage of the research was qualitative, based on discussion of the summary findings of the questionnaire with representatives of adult education bodies. Discussion was focused on adult students' needs in the area of guidance rather than their actual experience. This section of the research was carried out in May/June 1997.

1.5 Guidance was broken down into individual elements for the purposes of the study based on definitions taken from the "Guidelines for the Practice of Counselling and Guidance in Schools" (Department of Education, 1996). These definitions were as follows:

Information
Providing students with objective and factual data;

Counselling
Helping pupils to explore their own thoughts and feelings about their present life situation, about the choices open to them, and about the consequences of each choice;

Assessment
Using psychological and other tests to help students to make their own decisions;

Referrals
Helping students by directing them to qualified helpers;

Advice
Helping students by making suggestions based on the advisor's own knowledge and experience.

2. Students' Choice of Course and Guidance Received

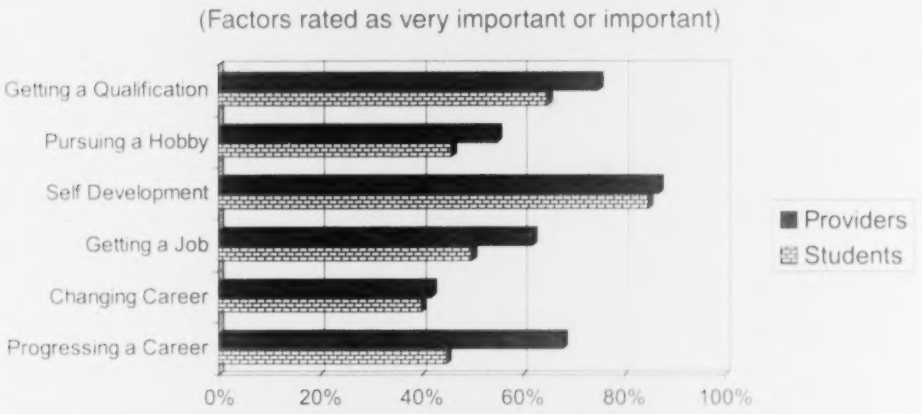
2.1 The factors governing adult students' choice of course were listed for the respondents as the following options: progressing a current career, changing career, getting a job, self development, pursuing a hobby and getting a recognised qualification. When asked how important each of the above factors was, the vast majority of respondents (85%) listed **self development** as the main factor. **Getting a qualification** (65%) was also a significant element in course choice. However, in this context it should be noted that of the total students who responded, 59% were in a course leading to a recognised qualification, with 12% working towards a Certificate of Attendance and only 29% undertaking a course with no qualification.

2.2 When students and providers were asked to rank the above factors in order of importance, a different picture emerged, with a wider spread of factors. Although a quarter of replies gave self-development and 18% gave getting a qualification as **the most important influence** on the choice of course, large numbers (17%/18%) cited either getting a job or progressing a career. 14% felt changing career was the most important factor, with only 8% citing pursuing a hobby.

2.3 While providers agreed by and large with the factors influencing students' choice of course, there was an interesting divergence between the responses of students and providers when it came to the nature of guidance received pre-choice. Students were asked to say whether they had received any of the specific elements of guidance listed above, but the only significant guidance which students said they had received was **information** (58% of students), with hardly any assessment, counselling, advice or referral provided. **Many students said they had received no guidance at all.**

2.4 Providers, on the other hand, presented more optimistic findings. As well as information (80%), about two thirds saw counselling as being available, while advice and referrals were listed by half of the providers. Only assessment received a low response. The answer to this apparent discrepancy may lie with the **informal** nature of many guidance contacts as described in the qualitative research by the providers. Either students are not aware of the availability of this informal system or of the formal guidance present, or else they do not perceive it as useful. Interestingly, few students were able to identify the **personal source** of the various forms of guidance received.

Fig. 2.1 Providers' and Students' Perception of Factors Prompting Students' Course Choice



(Note: adds to more than 100% because of multiple responses)

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Fig. 2.2 Elements of Guidance Received Before Making Course Choice – Students

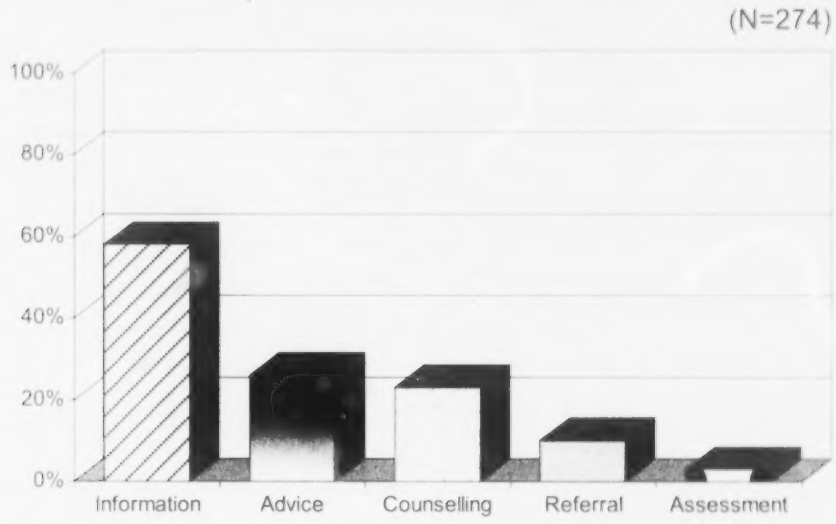
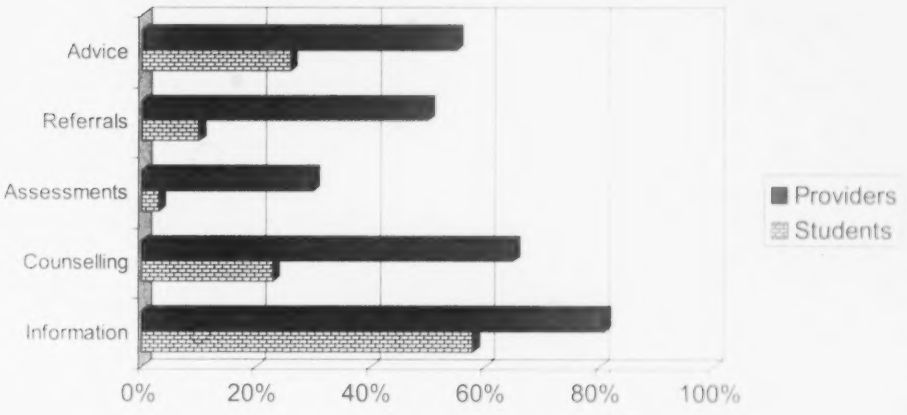


Fig. 2.3 Elements of Guidance received Before Making Course Choice – Students and Providers



2.5 There was apparently very little **post-choice** guidance available or availed of by students. Even fewer respondents than had received pre-choice guidance received further assistance with their choice once they had made it and were on the course.

2.6 On the positive side, when students were asked whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the level of guidance received, most of those who had received it expressed satisfaction (the level of satisfaction was not examined). However, guidance providers were not quite so sanguine. Most providers felt that levels of guidance provided were satisfactory, but not to the large extent that the students did. The discrepancy was most marked in relation to **assessment** – perhaps reflecting dissatisfaction with the nature of the materials available in this area. In the interviews with providers, the general feeling was that

> "they might feel that they are doing their best to provide as good a service as they can... but they feel their efforts are not being supported in a properly funded and organised system."

3. Students' Choice of College and Guidance Received

3.1 The respondents were asked to identify the importance of the following factors influencing students' choice of school or college: accessibility, time of classes, reputation for quality delivery and cost of course.

3.2 The factor most reported as either very important or important in students' choice of college was **accessibility**: this is not surprising given the familial and job commitments which adults, unlike many young people, must take account of when seeking to pursue further education. While 82% of replies cited accessibility, 69% also said either **time of class** or **reputation for quality delivery** were significant. When asked to state the most important factor influencing choice of college, almost half (45%) chose accessibility, but almost a third chose reputation for quality delivery (31%). Providers recognised these priorities in their findings.

3.3 The majority of students reported that they did not receive guidance in any form before making their school/college choice. Only one third of students reported receiving guidance in the form of information, and a much smaller proportion mentioned receiving any other forms of guidance. As with choice of course, the same problems about lack of post-choice guidance and inability to identify the personal sources for guidance services also arose here. The divergence between students' and adult providers' views was even greater in this area than it was in relation to course choice, with providers being much more positive about the level and variety of guidance on offer to students than were the students themselves. Again, the qualitative research highlighted the informal nature of much guidance as perceived by the providers, with use of the teachers' free time taking the place of an adequate structured system.

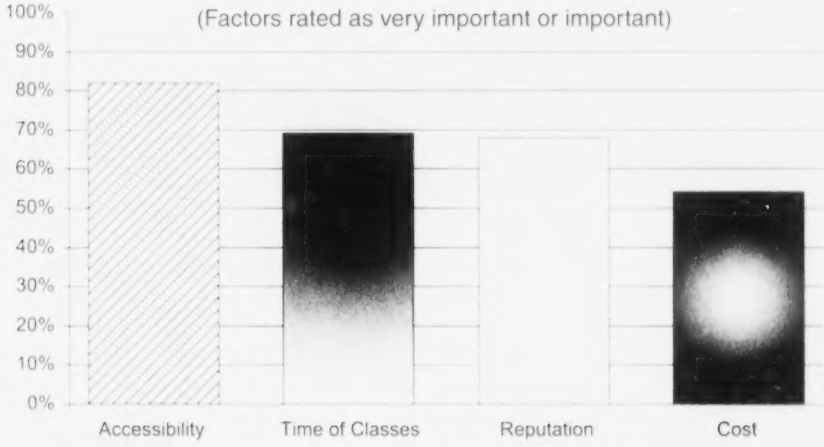
Providers felt that **improved communications** and **radical upgrading** of the service was needed. While the majority of students were again satisfied with any guidance they received, the providers were less so.

4. Overall Perceptions of Guidance

4.1 This section of the study aimed to show the current experience of guidance services by adult education students, and to examine their perceptions of guidance requirements. There were fairly clearcut findings in both these areas.

4.2 Firstly, in relation to rating the amount of help that students received in making decisions on the key questions of course and institution choice, a staggering **66% of stu-**

Fig. 3.1 Factors Influencing Students' School/College Choice



(Note: adds to more than 100% because of multiple responses)

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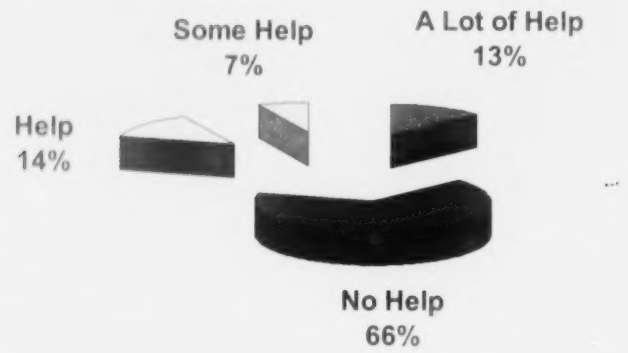
Fig. 4.1 Students' Overall Perception of the Amount of Guidance they Received

(N=274)



dents reported getting no help, while only 13% said they had got a lot of help. Interestingly, the providers agreed broadly with these findings, which perhaps means, the survey indicates, that the differences of opinion outlined in the previous section relate to differences of interpretation rather than substantive disagreement.

4.3 Having in the main reported getting little or no help with educational choices, the overwhelming majority of students and providers, when asked to rate the desirability of having a guidance service, saw it as very desirable or desirable. In the qualitative research, providers

> "were adamant that if there was to be access to lifelong learning, then it followed inevitably that guidance should be available to support it; one was no good without the other. This should be clear education policy at all levels of education delivery and across all sectors."
>
> *(COMAD, 1997, p. 21)*

5. Preferred Characteristics of Guidance

5.1 This section of the report aimed to ascertain the views of adult learners on the preferred characteristics of a guidance service under a number of headings:

- guidance sequence;
- extent of guidance;
- guidance setting;
- location of guidance;
- time of guidance;
- price for guidance;
- most important requirement of guidance.

The findings might be used by policy makers as part of any initiative to tackle the lack of guidance available to adult learners. It was intended as an input to policy formulation, and the cost implications of implementing any of these proposals were not covered.

5.2 The Guidance Sequence

Students were asked if they chose course or school/college first. The rationale behind this question was to establish the sequence of guidance decision-making by students and to match the provision of guidance with this. Although the overwhelming majority of students reported choosing the course first (81%), it followed that 19%, or almost one in five, put the institution first. Thus, in order to benefit adult students, guidance should begin prior to decisions on course choice.

5.3 The Extent of Guidance

Those respondents who had stated that guidance was either very desirable or desirable were also asked whether they felt such guidance should be available only pre-decision,

only post-decision or both before and after deciding on course and institution of further education. Over half (59%) of students wanted guidance available before and after their choices were made, with a further 9% wanting guidance available only after decision – making (fig. 5.1). As has already been mentioned, very little ongoing guidance for students who have already begun courses is available at present. The findings of this section of the questionnaire were supported by the qualitative research. **Providers strongly endorsed the need for ongoing guidance for adult learners and stressed the new departure and structures this would necessitate.**

5.4 Guidance Setting

Students were asked if they would prefer guidance to be delivered in a one-to-one or a group setting. The vast majority of students (75%) opted for **one-to-one delivery** and providers gave a similarly large response in favour of individual arrangements. This may reflect the complexity of vocational/educational decision making of adults as outlined in Chapter Two, and/or be an expression of the space/time required to think through decisions. The provision of group counselling should also be an option.

5.5 Location of Guidance

Some interesting organisational suggestions for the local provision of guidance arose from the replies to this section of the study. The quantitative research showed that the vast majority of adult students and providers (80% and 84% respectively) wanted a **local guidance service**. During the interviews, several suggestions about the organisation of such a service on cost grounds were made. One suggestion was that there should be

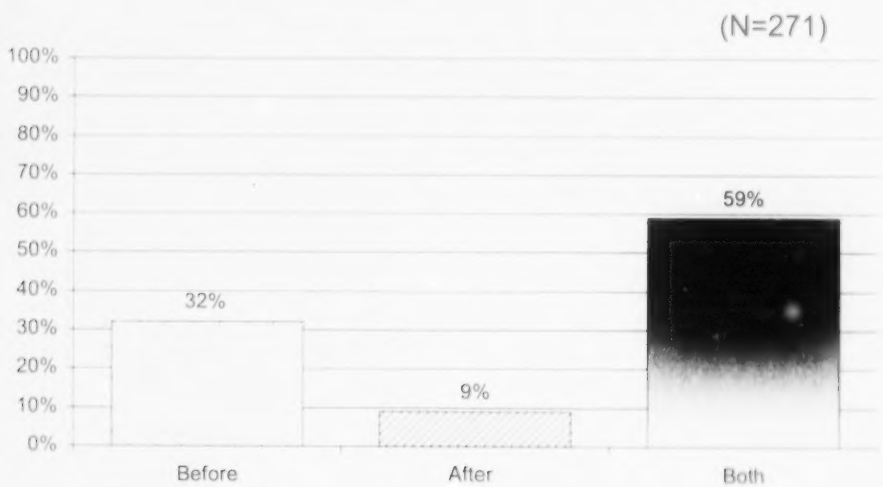
> "a central unbiased information service, along the lines of the service provided by Aontas at the moment. This could then be supplemented by local guidance counsellors who would not have as serious a burden of information provision as at present."

An associated proposal was for

> "the setting up of counselling for adult education on a county basis. The idea was that a full-time guidance counsellor would rotate among all the schools/colleges in his or her area." *(COMAD, 1997, p. 27)*

The latter approach, already in practice in community partnerships in Dublin and Limerick, has the advantages of eliminating

Fig. 5.1 Students' Requirements for Guidance Before and After Decision-Making



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bias towards any particular institution or sector and also of highlighting the differing guidance services required by young daytime and adult evening students in schools.

5.6 Time of Guidance

Student respondents were presented with a range of choices about the time at which they would like a guidance service to be available to them. The time slots given were: Saturday morning or afternoon, weekday mornings or afternoons, or weekday evenings. The preferred option was **weekday evenings**, with 44% of students choosing it. The next favourite slot was weekday mornings (24%). Saturdays were the least preferred time for guidance counselling. In their responses to the questionnaire, adult education providers generally agreed with this ranking order. In the interviews they suggested that, if feasible, a choice of times, such as weekday mornings or evenings, might be made available to facilitate adult learners. Alternatively, an extended evening time provision might be both more feasible and also serve to differentiate adult from young students.

5.7 Price of Guidance

Both adult education students and providers were divided into three groups and presented with one of three different prices. The students were asked if they would pay these amounts for guidance services. The adult providers had to say if they thought the price levels would enable a satisfactory guidance service to be offered. The three prices were: £25, £35 and £45.

5.7.1 The responses varied between students and providers. Among the students, there was not a great deal of difference in the responses as between price levels. The majority, between about 55% to 65%, said they would probably or certainly pay the prices suggested to them. **Between 35% and 45% of students said either "no" or "unlikely" about their willingness to pay any price.** These respondents were mainly VTOS participants.

5.7.2 Providers' responses, however, were much more sensitive to the different price levels. Generally they seemed happier with a fee of either £25 (about 80% either probably or certainly would support it) or £35 (virtually all in favour). Providers did not seem to think that a fee of £45 was appropriate, with 80% of replies answering "no" or "unlikely". Interestingly, the qualitative research yielded a somewhat different response: **providers were not in favour of charging for guidance**. The following points emerged from this section of the interviews:

- providers felt that if it were necessary to introduce charges, a lower threshold was preferred;
- they pointed out that the rates proposed were much higher than the rate for part-time teaching, to which presumably they should relate;
- the current charges by private guidance services had the effect of limiting access to guidance;
- it would be somewhat anomalous if there was a charge for guidance for students undertaking a course (VTOS) which in itself was free.

In summary, the majority of students and education providers accepted that guidance services should be charged to students who could afford it and free to those who could not.

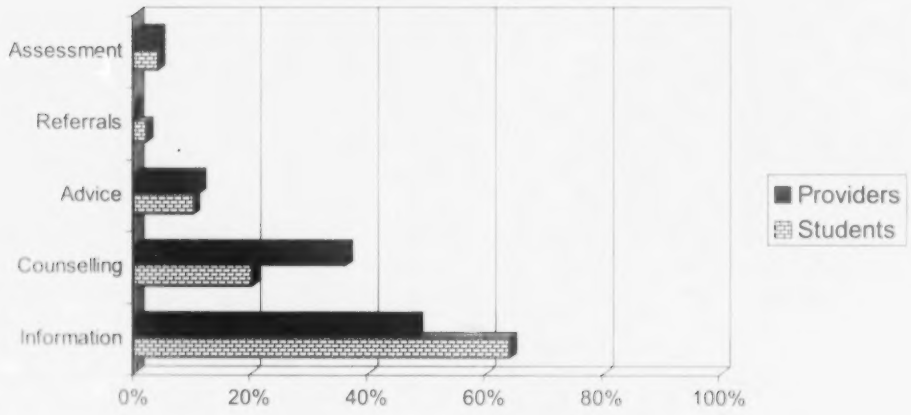
5.8 Most Important Requirement of Guidance

This section of the study was divided into two parts in order to identify the one element of guidance that was felt to be helpful to students in making decisions on course and school/college choice. Firstly, both students and providers were asked to give a completely unprompted answer (in their own words) about what they saw as the most important requirement of guidance. Secondly, they were given the list of guidance elements outlined in paragraph 1.5 of this paper and asked to choose their preferred element.

5.8.1 The unprompted responses revealed that adult education students perceived **information provision in the form of booklets about course content and, to a lesser extent, about careers as most helpful to them.** This ties in with the discussion in the literature about elements considered important for a counselling service for adult learners.

5.8.2 Adult education providers, in their unprompted responses, agreed with students

Fig. 5.2 Preference for the Type of Guidance Which Should be provided – Students and Providers



that information provision was paramount. However, **many providers felt that counselling was also very important**. In the interviews they commented that adult students' feelings of confidence did not prevent them from, in practice, frequently seeking guidance from counsellors. Some providers surmised that students' responses might be conditioned by their feeling that no guidance service would be provided; thus they would prefer, as a minimum, to have information.

5.8.3 When asked to identify the most important of a list of the five elements of guidance (information, assessment, referrals, advice and counselling), students again opted in the majority of cases for information (64%), but counselling was chosen by 20% and advice by 10%. Providers, in contrast, gave a much higher profile than did students to counselling, with 35% identifying counselling and 45% identifying information. In the qualitative research relating to this section of the study, providers interpreted the preference by students for information provision as reflecting a lack of knowledge by students about the guidance function. They further felt that there was a need for a full guidance service, despite student preferences; and that vocational and educational guidance cannot be divorced and both should be made available to students.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Two key findings emerge from the research work carried out in the COMAD study. Firstly, it is essential that there be clear communication between the adult education provider and the student about available guidance if the service is to reach its full potential in enabling lifelong learning. It must be clearly communicated to students that guidance is available, the nature of the formal structure under which it is provided, and the names and accessibility of guidance counsellors.

6.2 Secondly, it is clear both from the responses to the questionnaire and from the qualitative research carried out that a radical upgrading of the existing service is required.

- Every school and college that provides adult education should also provide a guidance service, which at minimum supplies adult learners with the guidance information they require to make their decisions, but which ideally should include vocational as well as educational requirements, and post-decision guidance;
- an after-hours service (i.e. weekday evenings) should be provided.

CHAPTER 5

KEY DEVELOPMENT ISSUES: ADULT EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE – IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE IN IRELAND

1. The Need for Adult Guidance

1.1 As Chapter 1 of this paper has shown, many thousands of adult learners are entering into further education each year in Ireland and the sector is undergoing rapid expansion. It is estimated, based on demographic trends, that future growth in university student numbers, for example, will depend on the increased numbers of adult students returning to or undertaking further education. The findings of the COMAD study, the international literature on adult career development, and recent policy and practice in the UK, all show that there is complete justification and urgent need for a dedicated guidance service for adults in education.

1.2 The following points in favour of a specific adult educational guidance service emerge from this paper.

- Adults form a diverse grouping with diverse requirements of an educational guidance service.
- Adults' complex life role responsibilities (e.g. work, family life) place specific constraints on their ability to access not only further education institutions in geographical terms but also a guidance service which is only offered in traditional settings and timetabled for young people.
- In the new climate of careerquake adults must, firstly, take primary responsibility for their own career development, and, secondly, be prepared for constant retraining - lifelong learning.
- Commitment to a policy of lifelong learning demands a proactive and widely accessible guidance service, if those adults most in need of such learning are to avail of it.
- A successful adult guidance service can assist in retraining workers and in better work placement thereby helping to reduce unemployment.

2. Formulating a National Policy for Adult Educational Guidance

2.1 As the UK experience has shown, development of adult guidance practice in a policy vacuum, however innovatory and worthwhile, has tended to lead to short-term initiatives and "pilot-project"-type funding. It is clear that **development of adult educational guidance must take place within the framework of a clear national policy based on detailed adult guidance needs and on structures of adult education in Ireland.**

2.2 Secondly, it would be useful to develop an operational model of **adult educational guidance**, perhaps drawing on the experience of the UK. An agreed working definition is essential in order to co-ordinate and optimise services aimed at attracting the adult learner into education and work and assisting them through careerquakes.

2.3 Thirdly, before a national policy can be formulated, **a comprehensive description of adult education structures and the existing provision of adult educational guidance is essential.** It has been stated that "there is probably no area of education where the difficulties encountered by lack of research material are more evident than in the field of adult education" (Drudy and Lynch, 1993, p. 261). The COMAD study highlights the strong feelings which both adult learners and adult guidance providers hold about current and likely guidance provision in relation to school and third level education.

3. Key Issues in Policy Formation

3.1 As outlined in Chapter 3, the UK experience has been that a **centralised formal body** – the National Educational Guidance Initiative – is essential to develop and promote adult guidance, in conjunction with local services. The NACCEG has proposed a **national infrastructure for guidance involving a two-tier model – a free foundation level service and a more specialist charged service.**

3.2 In Ireland, there are several possibilities for centralising control of adult educational guidance. The use of an existing major provider, while attractive, would raise issues of the independence of a service which such a provider might offer. A recent study has proposed that an **Irish National Guidance Initiative for Adult Learners** be established, under the aegis of the National Centre for Guidance in Education, and this proposal merits serious consideration.

(Burke, 1996).

3.3 A major issue dealt within the UK literature is the question of charging for guidance services. Current proposals are for the establishment of a free national Hotline telephone service and a free basic "front-end" service in local offices. Different methodologies for a system of differential fees, such as the voucher system discussed by Watts, are being considered. However, some UK commentators have also expressed doubts about the validity of charging for guidance services.

> "The applicability of market principles is at present being tested in relation to most government activities. But guidance is itself a means of addressing market imperfections in relation to provision of education, training and employment - notably that of imperfect information. If a market or quasi-market in guidance proves itself to be imperfect in this respect, then, logically, further intervention is required to address this imperfection. Or it needs to be recognised that to apply market forces to guidance is to advance a bridge too far." *(Watts, 1995, p. 80)*

3.4 Other key elements of a national adult educational guidance policy which have been raised in the UK literature and are borne out by the findings of the COMAD study, are as follows:

- **flexibility**: to encompass the wide range of adult needs;
- **local availability**: to allow for locally differing requirements and to ensure ease of access by adult learners hampered by geographical restrictions;
- the availability of **ongoing** guidance in third level colleges, including post-education guidance;
- maintaining the **autonomy** of guidance services;
- the putting in place of **quality standards**, including practitioner standards (guidance qualifications);
- the need for a **proactive** system in order to draw in those least likely to avail of guidance (who tend to be those with the greatest need of such a service);
- **networking** of professional organisations in the area of adult guidance and hence development of referral systems and market intelligence.

3.5 Finally, it cannot be emphasised enough that adult educational guidance is a social service on a par with education itself and must be available to all sections of society. While there is certainly an argument for charging for certain higher level services, as in Denmark, for example, it must not be forgotten that "guidance is in a different category from most other public services"(Watts, 1995, p. 80) and that the role of guidance is to promote lifelong learning as the way forward in our society. It is being shown that those most in need of further education are those least likely to avail of it. Educational guidance for adults has the potential to outweigh social disadvantage, and, based on a well-designed infrastructure and delivering a responsive, proactive service, to

> "catch the eye of potential learners in their everyday roles, and make the link between where they are and where learning might take them."
>
> *(NACCEG, 1996, p. 4)*

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